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2 **CLAIMS:**

3 What is claimed is:

1 1. A method for updating software on a data processing
2 system having a root device and a back-off device which
3 is a mirror of the root device, the method comprising:
4 executing a preparation function on the data
5 processing system;
6 responsive to a determination that the preparation
7 function completed successfully, breaking a root
8 mirroring function of the data processing system such
9 that changes to the root device do not affect the back-
10 off device;
11 upgrading the root device of the data processing
12 system; and
13 responsive to a determination that the upgrading the
14 root device of the data processing system was
15 unsuccessful, recovering an original state of the root
16 device using the back-off device.

1 2. The method as recited in claim 1, further
2 comprising:
3 responsive to a determination that the upgrading the
4 root partition of the data processing system was
5 successful, remirroring the root device such that the
6 root device and the back-off device are substantially
7 identical.

1 3. The method as recited in claim 1, further
2 comprising:

3 prior to upgrading the root device, determining
4 whether the data processing system can boot from the
5 back-off device; and

6 responsive to a determination that the data
7 processing system cannot boot from the back-off device,
8 determining a reason for the inability of the data
9 processing system to boot from the back-off device.

1 4. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the
2 preparation function comprises:

3 presenting a user with at least one configuration
4 question; and

5 storing a response to the at least one configuration
6 question as configuration data.

1 5. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein
2 remirroring the root device such that the root device and
3 the back-off device are substantially identical
4 comprises:

5 setting a volume manager to use plexes on the back-
6 off device as source plexes of volumes; and

7 rebooting the data processing system using the back-
8 off device.

1 6. The method as recited in claim 5, further
2 comprising:

3 overlaying data in the managed file systems on the
4 root device using data from the back-off device

1 7. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the data
2 processing system is a server.

1 8. A computer program product in a computer readable
2 media for use in a data processing system for updating
3 software on a data processing system having a root device
4 and a back-off device which is a mirror of the root
5 device, the computer program product comprising:
6 first instructions for executing a preparation
7 function on the data processing system;
8 second instructions for breaking a root mirroring
9 function of the data processing system such that changes
10 to the root device do not affect the back-off device if
11 the preparation function completed successfully;;
12 third instructions for upgrading the root device of
13 the data processing system; and
14 fourth instructions for recovering an original state
15 of the root device using the back-off device if the
16 upgrading the root device of the data processing system
17 was unsuccessful.

1 9. The computer program product as recited in claim 8,
2 further comprising:
3 fifth instructions for remirroring the root device
4 such that the root device and the back-off device are

5 substantially identical if the upgrading the root
6 partition of the data processing system was successful.

1 10. The computer program product as recited in claim 8,
2 further comprising:

3 fifth instructions for determining, prior to
4 upgrading the root device, whether the data processing
5 system can boot from the back-off device; and

6 sixth instructions for determining a reason for the
7 inability of the data processing system to boot from the
8 back-off device if the data processing system cannot boot
9 from the back-off device.

1 11. The computer program product as recited in claim 8,
2 wherein the preparation function comprises:

3 fifth instructions for presenting a user with at
4 least one configuration question; and

5 sixth instructions for storing a response to the at
6 least one configuration question as configuration data.

1 12. The computer program product as recited in claim 8,
2 wherein remirroring the root device such that the root
3 device and the back-off device are substantially
4 identical comprises:

5 fifth instructions for setting a volume manager to
6 use plexes on the back-off device as source plexes of
7 volumes; and

8 sixth instructions for rebooting the data processing
9 system using the back-off device.

1 13. The computer program product as recited in claim 12,
2 further comprising:

3 seventh instructions for overlaying data in the
4 managed file systems on the root device using data from
5 the back-off device

1 14. The computer program product as recited in claim 8,
2 wherein the data processing system is a server.

1 15. A system for updating software on a data processing
2 system having a root device and a back-off device which
3 is a mirror of the root device, the system comprising:

4 first means for executing a preparation function on
5 the data processing system;

6 second means for breaking a root mirroring function
7 of the data processing system such that changes to the
8 root device do not affect the back-off device if the
9 preparation function completed successfully,;

10 third means for upgrading the root device of the
11 data processing system; and

12 fourth means for recovering an original state of the
13 root device using the back-off device if the upgrading
14 the root device of the data processing system was
15 unsuccessful.

1 16. The system as recited in claim 15, further
2 comprising:

3 fifth means for remirroring the root device such
4 that the root device and the back-off device are

5 substantially identical if the upgrading the root
6 partition of the data processing system was successful.

1 17. The system as recited in claim 15, further
2 comprising:

3 fifth means for determining, prior to upgrading the
4 root device, whether the data processing system can boot
5 from the back-off device; and

6 sixth means for determining a reason for the
7 inability of the data processing system to boot from the
8 back-off device if the data processing system cannot boot
9 from the back-off device.

1 18. The system as recited in claim 15, wherein the
2 preparation function comprises:

3 fifth means for presenting a user with at least one
4 configuration question; and

5 sixth means for storing a response to the at least
6 one configuration question as configuration data.

1 19. The system as recited in claim 15, wherein
2 remirroring the root device such that the root device and
3 the back-off device are substantially identical
4 comprises:

5 fifth means for setting a volume manager to use
6 plexes on the back-off device as source plexes of
7 volumes; and

8 sixth means for rebooting the data processing system
9 using the back-off device.

1 20. The system as recited in claim 19, further
2 comprising:
3 seventh means for overlaying data in the managed
4 file systems on the root device using data from the back-
5 off device

1 21. The system as recited in claim 15, wherein the data
2 processing system is a server.